

Congress want a windfall profits tax. That is what the oil companies understand. When we get that up to 100 co-sponsors, then the oil companies are going to start backing off, because right now, their foot is on the accelerator. They are looking at \$3 a gallon, \$4 a gallon, \$5 a gallon.

We have to stand up for the American people, and that is what we are here to do.

A NEW APPROACH TO ENERGY PROBLEMS

(Mr. JINDAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JINDAL. Mr. Speaker, the Nation's energy prices continue to rise. Families and businesses are feeling the pinch. We are paying the price for decades of extra taxes, poor energy policy, curtailed exploration and a lack of new refineries.

The Nation needs to take a new approach to our energy problems. We need to break our dependency on foreign sources of oil, which leaves us at the mercy of foreign powers. To do that, we should increase domestic energy production.

My bill, H.R. 4761, gives States control over the waters off their shores and encourages them to increase energy exploration by giving them a share of the revenues generated.

We should increase our development of alternative fuels, taking advantage of renewable resources, like using corn and sugar to produce ethanol or soybeans to produce biodiesel.

Finally, we should help developing nations like China and India curb their exponentially increasing consumption of oil and natural gas, which is driving world prices higher.

India, in particular, is looking to develop nuclear power for domestic, commercial use, and we should work with them. This is a good deal for both countries. India develops its own self-sustaining nuclear power sources, which will limit their need for oil and natural gas. We get a reduction in the demand for world energy, lowering prices in the process.

Clearly, the energy problems facing us are too big to use yesterday's thinking.

THE "DO LESS THAN NOTHING CONGRESS"

(Mr. COOPER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of problems mentioned on the House floor today. We should be aware that this House is doing a very poor job of addressing any of these problems. Why? Because this is one of the laziest Congresses in all of American history.

We are scheduled to meet this year fewer days than any Congress since at least 1948. And that is even before I was

born. So far, we are in the 123rd day of this year, and yet we have only had 26 voting days in this body. That is a shame.

This Congress is simply not doing its job under Republican leadership. They are the ones that set the schedule. Harry Truman called that Congress of 1948 the "Do Nothing Congress" of 1948. How do you do less than nothing? Sadly, the American people are about to find out, thanks to our friends on the other side of the aisle.

COMMENDING STANLY COUNTY NATIVE AND AMERICAN IDOL CONTESTANT KELLIE PICKLER

(Mr. HAYES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate Albemarle, North Carolina, native and "American Idol" contestant Kellie Pickler for pursuing her dream and using her God-given talent to sing. Kellie is returning home, but she consistently received some of the highest vote totals of any of the other contestants. And it is easy to understand why. Kellie's charm and talent clearly defined her success each week as Americans tuned in to the most popular show on television. Kellie will be returning home to Stanly County and North Carolina a true idol to many for her performances, her extraordinary singing voice and the grace she personified in front of millions as she represented her community, family and friends.

Kellie, we wish you the best. I know that great opportunities lie ahead for you.

MEDICARE DRUG PROGRAM

(Mr. LIPINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, in less than 12 days, seniors face a critical deadline. By May 15, they must sign up for a Medicare prescription drug plan. After this date, they will pay a permanent penalty of 1 percent for every month that they wait to join, a penalty they will pay on top of their premium for the rest of their lives.

I have held more than three dozen seminars across my district to help seniors navigate through the overly complex program, and they keep calling asking for more help. They are understandably confused by the more than 60 different choices that they have. The least we can do is give seniors more time to understand their options so that they can make their best choice.

To do this, Congress must pass the Medicare Informed Choice Act which would delay the late enrollment penalty, prevent beneficiaries from losing their employer-based coverage and allow seniors to switch plans if they

make a mistake. More than 70 percent of seniors are asking for more time. It is long overdue for Congress to listen and make sure that seniors have a prescription drug plan that works for them.

CAPTURE OF MICHAEL BENSON

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as a Member of Congress and a parent, to thank the many law enforcement officers whose hard work resulted in yesterday's capture of escaped child sexual predator Michael Benson.

I would also commend John Walsh and the viewers of "America's Most Wanted," who helped make Benson the 888th criminal apprehended after being featured on the show.

However, I stand here today deeply frustrated that obstructionists in the other body are using procedural gimmicks to block passage of the Child Safety Act, which the House first passed overwhelmingly more than 8 months ago.

Mr. Speaker, this act will help our children keep safe from predators like Michael Benson, and I urge the other body to quit obstructing and pass this vital bill.

RECOGNITION OF NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND

(Mr. LARSEN of Washington asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Department of Defense for its recognition of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island as a model military installation for the country. Base Commander Captain Syd Abernethy and the Island County community will accept the Annual Commander-in-Chiefs Award for Installation Excellence on Friday.

This award recognizes the hard work and exceptional efforts of the people who operate NAS Whidbey, and I praise that team effort, from the men and women on the ground to those in the sky. They make this installation run.

The community and the residents of Oak Harbor and Island County play an integral role in protecting and promoting NAS Whidbey. It is their support year after year that makes NAS Whidbey great.

NAS Whidbey has emerged as a national center of electronic warfare and anti-submarine warfare operations. These missions will be pivotal to creating the type of military the Department of Defense wants to build in the upcoming years. NAS Whidbey will likely have to accommodate tremendous growth in the future, and this award shows that the team and infrastructure are in place to do the job.

LET'S REDUCE OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, gas prices are too high, and so Washington has already begun to posture.

I know how angry people can become when gas prices rise. I spent 5 years working my way through college pumping gas at Ray's Marathon. And it is important that Washington respond. But we ought to respond with the real answer, which is to reduce our dependence on foreign oil by opening up America's own domestic reserves in the intercoastal regions and the Alaskan National Wildlife Region.

If the U.S. Geological Survey is correct, if we opened up ANWR, we could increase our domestic reserves by 50 percent. If President Bill Clinton had not vetoed legislation opening ANWR to environmentally responsible exploration in 1995, we would be pumping millions of barrels from ANWR today.

Let's reduce the price of gasoline for future generations of Americans. Let's reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

REPUBLICAN INACTION ON SKYROCKETING GAS PRICES

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, the American people are fed up with us in Congress. They finally see the House Republican majority for what it is, nothing but a rubber stamp for President Bush and his special interest friends. House Republicans simply have no agenda for helping everyday Americans. Perhaps that is the reason we have only been in session for 26 days so far this year.

If House Republicans were really interested in helping the American people, they would join us in tracking and tackling our Nation's energy crisis. House Republicans failed to address skyrocketing gas prices in their energy bill last year. Instead, they chose to follow the President in supporting a bill that gave the oil and gas companies \$20 billion in special interest gifts while doing absolutely nothing to ease the sticker shock consumers face every time they fill up at the pump.

Democrats have a plan that works for all Americans, not just big oil and gas CEOs. Our plan not only cracks down on price gouging but also calls for an increase in production of alternative fuels.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION PUTTING INCOMPETENT CHERTOFF IN CHARGE OF AVIAN FLU

(Mr. NADLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush is expected to announce his appointment of Homeland Security Chief Michael Chertoff to lead the administration's efforts to combat a potential avian flu epidemic.

Didn't the President learn anything from Hurricane Katrina? Michael Chertoff is the same man responsible for the incompetent, inept and tragically unacceptable response to Hurricane Katrina. If Secretary Chertoff couldn't properly oversee the administration's response to a hurricane along the gulf coast that we knew about days in advance, how is he supposed to lead the response to a flu pandemic that could hit at any time?

The Bush administration is already woefully unprepared to fight an avian flu pandemic. The President's own administration has warned that a worst-case scenario here in the U.S. would entail an 18-month-long crisis in which as many as 1.9 million Americans could be killed.

An avian flu crisis needs a serious and competent administrator to oversee our response. The Bush administration is once again showing it will take a crony over a competent administrator every time. It is time for the administration to show that it actually can lead. It is time they turn away from the cronies and find someone competent for a change so the avian flu pandemic doesn't surprise us the way the expected Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed us.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

CONGRATULATING CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND AD- MINISTRATORS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES FOR THEIR ON- GOING CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDU- CATION

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 781), congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 781

Whereas charter schools deliver high-quality education and challenge our students to reach their potential;

Whereas charter schools provide thousands of families with diverse and innovative educational options for their children;

Whereas charter schools are public schools authorized by a designated public entity that are responding to the needs of our communities, families, and students and promoting the principles of quality, choice, and innovation;

Whereas in exchange for the flexibility and autonomy given to charter schools, they are held accountable by their sponsors for improving student achievement and for their financial and other operations;

Whereas 40 States and the District of Columbia have passed laws authorizing charter schools;

Whereas over 3,600 charter schools are now operating in 40 States and the District of Columbia serving more than 1 million students;

Whereas over the last 12 years, Congress has provided nearly \$1,775,000,000 in support to the charter school movement through facilities financing assistance and grants for planning, startup, implementation, and dissemination;

Whereas charter schools improve their students' achievement and stimulate improvement in traditional public schools;

Whereas charter schools must meet the student achievement accountability requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in the same manner as traditional public schools, and often set higher and additional individual goals to ensure that they are of high quality and truly accountable to the public;

Whereas charter schools give parents new freedom to choose their public school, routinely measure parental satisfaction levels, and must prove their ongoing success to parents, policymakers, and their communities;

Whereas nearly 56 percent of charter schools report having a waiting list, and the total number of students on all such waiting lists is enough to fill over 1,100 average-sized charter schools;

Whereas charter schools nationwide serve a higher percentage of low-income and minority students than the traditional public system;

Whereas charter schools have enjoyed broad bipartisan support from the Administration, Congress, State Governors and legislatures, educators, and parents across the United States; and

Whereas the seventh annual National Charter Schools Week, to be held May 1 through 6, 2006, is an event sponsored by charter schools and grassroots charter school organizations across the United States to recognize the significant impacts, achievements, and innovations of charter schools: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives acknowledges and commends charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education and improving and strengthening our public school system;

(2) the House of Representatives supports the seventh annual National Charter Schools Week; and

(3) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to conduct appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities to demonstrate support for charter schools during this weeklong celebration in communities throughout the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada.